



September 7, 2016

House Local Government Committee  
Anderson House Office Building  
Post Office Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909-7514

Dear Chairman Chatfield and Members of the Committee:

Make Michigan Next is a coalition of animal welfare organizations, including Detroit Bully Corps, Michigan Pit Bull Education Project, Paws for Life Rescue, Dog Aide Community Awareness, Mi-PACA, Devoted Friends Animal Society, We're Lovers Not Fighters, Luv-N-Pupz, Louis' Legacy Foundation, Detroit Animal Welfare Group, Providing for Paws and Bruised But Not Broken.

These organizations have fought tirelessly for decades to protect the property rights of pet owners in our state, to prevent discrimination laws from tearing families apart and to improve public safety through fact-based, effective legislation.

Today, we ask you to vote in support of Senate Bill 239.

Twenty states have passed laws similar to SB 239 that protect a person's property rights by prohibiting breed-discriminatory or breed-specific ordinances (BSL). Since 2013, Utah, South Dakota, Nevada, Rhode Island and Connecticut have enacted similar pieces of legislation to protect their citizens from local government overreach. These states have all recognized that the best way to promote public safety is to focus on the real problem: the behavior of the individual dog and the behavior of the owner.

Our bill would allow local governments to continue to pass common-sense animal control laws within their jurisdictions, but it would also make Michigan a model of consistency and fairness by prohibiting local governments from enacting and enforcing laws that ban certain dogs by their breed or appearance.

One of the arguments advanced against SB 239 is that breed-specific laws make our communities safer.

But, we know otherwise.

Those banding together to eliminate BSL from our state know that these discriminatory laws don't make Michiganders safer. How do we know that? Because study after study has shown that BSL costs communities money and accomplishes nothing. In fact, in some locales, dog bites increased after the passage of BSL.

Not only do these laws do nothing to make communities safer, they're a waste of resources. According to economist John Dunham and Associates, if our state enacted a breed discriminatory provision targeting pit bull terriers it would cost the state more than \$15 million each year to enforce. Similarly, the Platte Institute for Economic Research, a conservative think-tank, has determined that pit bull bans are a waste of tax dollars.

That's why a host of national organizations, including the American Kennel Club, the American Veterinary Association, the American Bar Association, the Humane Society of the United States, the ASPCA, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Animal Care and Control Association and the White House have endorsed a ban on BSL.

Dog owners in Michigan deserve the right to be treated fairly in every city, village and township in our state. Ending breed-specific legislation would do precisely that while allowing local governments to focus on regulations that place the onus where it should be: on irresponsible owners and specific dogs that display specific behaviors.

Make Michigan Next urges you to protect Michigan families and vote in support of Senate Bill 239. Thank you for your time.